

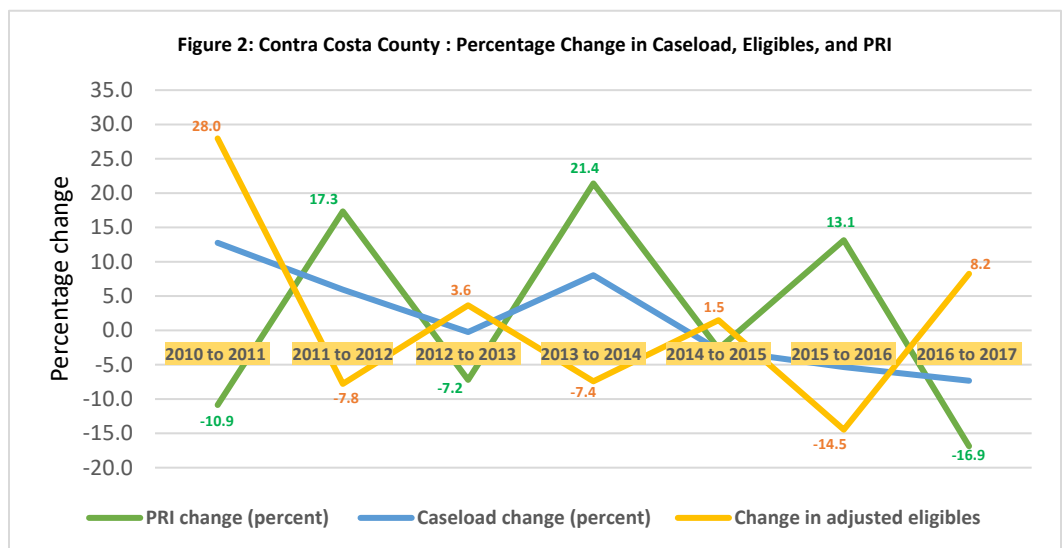
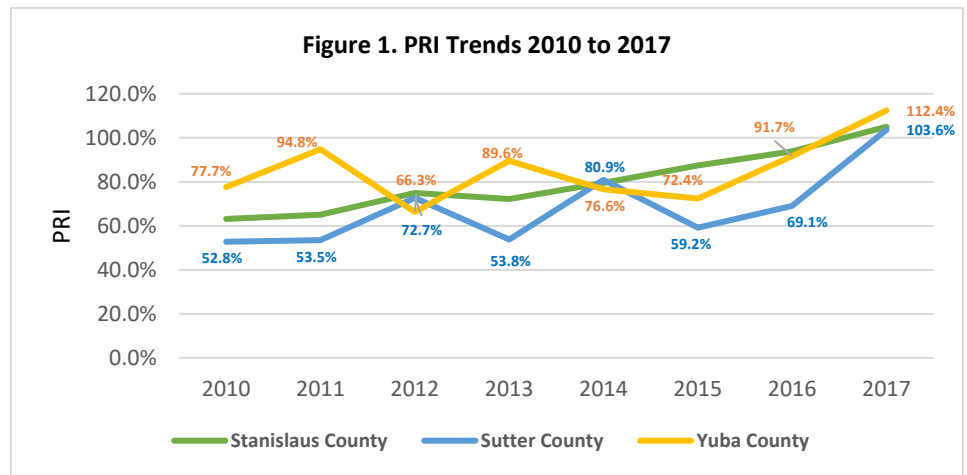
The Program Reach Index (PRI)

The Relationship Between PRI, Caseload, and Eligible Populations: How to Interpret Changes Over Time

The Program reach Index (PRI) estimates CalFresh access among individuals who meet CalFresh eligibility requirements. The measure excludes SSI recipients and individuals not eligible for reasons such as citizenship status. It is one indicator of how well counties are doing in enrolling individuals in CalFresh. A high PRI score indicates a CalFresh program that has high utilization among eligible people.

The PRI has limitations related to:

1. The delay by over a year in annual release of the American Community Survey (ACS) data used to estimate the size of the eligible population.
2. ACS data being sample-based (with margins of error) results in year-over-year variations some of which are not statistically significant but could lead to double-digit increases or decreases in PRI (Figure 1).
3. Inability to tell how much of the year-over-year change is due to actual increase or decrease in caseload or changes in the number of eligible persons, versus sampling variations.
4. Even though real changes are taking place, it appears that the bigger factor is the sampling variation.
5. Analysis based on data from Contra Costa



County (Figure 2) appears to confirm that the bigger factor is the year-over-year change in ACS estimates, and hence the size of the adjusted denominator used to calculate PRI.

6. In an internal testing of differences in the number of persons below 125% FPL (the closest threshold to the 130% FPL that CDSS uses), differences in the year-over-year estimates for the majority of counties were found not to be statistically significant when two consecutive years are compared.
7. Eighteen counties have populations sizes that are below the threshold for a yearly ACS' estimate. As a result, a five-year data is used as the PRI denominator. This means that only non-overlapping five-year periods could be compared (example 2006-2010 vs 2011-2015).
8. Some of the counties with one-year estimates have very small sample sizes which leads to significant under or over estimation of the eligible population. Under estimation could lead to a PRI of over 100 percent (Figure 1) due to the finding of more persons in the numerator receiving CalFresh than the number of eligible persons in the denominator.